

## **Acsenda School of Management**

Tea with the Chancellor

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### **Being Canadian; Being Courteous**

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Chancellor

#### **Introduction**

TEA WITH CHANCELLOR

Good afternoon.

CHANCELLOR

It is my privilege to be the Chancellor of the Acsenda School of Management. This is an honorary position. I am not a member of the Acsenda staff. My role is to preside at Acsenda's degree ceremonies, which are called convocations, and I am also a member of the Academic Council and the Strategic Planning Committee.

The chancellors of most universities focus on fund-raising and relations with the local community, but President Mort and I have agreed that

STUDENTS

the role of Acsenda's chancellor would focus more on relations with students – you!

I do this partly by holding meetings like this each term where we can discuss current issues in the wider world. Don't come here to ask questions about details of your courses at Acsenda, but more for discussions about broader local and global issues.

SERIES TITLE

I start each session by talking for 10-15 minutes before turning it over to you for questions and discussion. The title for this series of sessions is *Challenges for Changing Times*.

Canada, your own home countries and the wider world face many challenges. Each of you could produce your own list. In this year's series, I focus on five of today's challenges.

LIST CHALLENGES

Here they are.

- Work
- Inequality
- Canadian values
- Truth
- Trust.

At our session last term, we looked at the second of these: Inequality

CANADIAN VALUES

Today I shall take the third, Canadian values.

Are there distinct values and habits that characterise this country? Are you Canadians - or hoping to become Canadians – and do you live or intend to adopt those values?

I would also like to hear your impressions of how Canada is different from your own countries of origin; and ask why Canada's history and geography make it different.

I shall take a very practical approach. How do Canadians express their values in everyday life?

#### MULRONEY

Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was one of many people who have remarked that Canadians are unusually courteous, polite and cooperative.

Let's think about that in day-to-day life.

#### STEPPING ON TOES

Sometimes Canadian politeness becomes a joke. When someone steps on another's toe by mistake it's often the Canadian who is stepped on who says sorry, not the person who stepped on them.

#### BUS AND TRUCK

This picture of a truck driving into a bus caricatures the same idea.

Let's take some practical examples from around Vancouver. Do you thank bus drivers?

#### THANK BUS DRIVERS

Have you heard other passengers thank bus drivers? It seems that bus drivers like it. With this little courtesy, everyone feels happier about their day.

What about queueing – or lining up for buses?

#### INDIA

This photo was taken in India.

#### BC BUS QUEUE

This one here in Vancouver. People organise themselves differently in each case.

#### LIONS GATE ZIPPER

If any of you drive here, you may have taken the Lions Gate bridge, and seen the way that drivers take turns to 'zipper in' when they have to form a single lane. It's much more efficient and faster for everyone than if each driver just tries to barge into line in a disorderly way.

#### FOUR-WAY STOP

Still on the roads, you will have seen the very north American phenomenon of the Four-Way-Stop. Drivers take turns to go depending on the order of their arrival at the junction. Would this work in your country?

Just two final examples from everyday life.

## AIRCRAFT

Getting off an aircraft is another situation where being polite and orderly; waiting one's turn means that everyone gets off the plane more quickly with less danger of being hit by swinging bags.

## LIFTS

My final example is very relevant for you in this building that Acsenda shares with other organisations. How do you get in and out of the elevators? Do you just barge past people or show courtesy to other users?

## PEOPLE WILL JUDGE

Remember that, rightly or wrongly, other users of this large building will judge Acsenda and the quality of your degrees on this simple aspect of your behaviour. Firms in the building are less likely to hire you or offer placements if you come across as ill-mannered people. Those working on the other floors will tell their friends that the Acsenda students are not a nice crowd.

## GEESE CROSSING

Canada is a polite and orderly place. Even the animals obey the rules of courtesy!

Before I open it up for discussion let's ask why Canadians tend to be more polite, courteous and cooperative than most other nations. I am sure you will have your own ideas but let me mention two.

## A FAIR COUNTRY

If you want to understand why Canada is the way it is I recommend that you read this book, 'A Fair Country' by John Ralston Saul. Ralston Saul is a prominent public intellectual and the husband of one of our former governors-general, Adrienne Clarkson. Incidentally Adrienne Clarkson was born in Hong Kong. An immigrant became Governor-General of Canada.

But to go back to Ralston Saul's book

## FAIR - BEAUTIFUL

The word 'fair' has two meanings. One meaning is 'beautiful' and I'm sure you agree that Canada is a beautiful country.

But 'fair' also means 'just', 'unbiased' or 'equitable'. Saul embraces both these meanings in his title.

Canada is a vast territory, most of it with a harsh winter climate.

## CANOE

The early settlers from Europe could not have survived if they had not cooperated closely with the First Nations people who had come here much earlier. The exploration of western Canada and the establishment of the fur trade was a joint effort.

## NWMP

Also, the settlement of western Canada was much more orderly than the fighting in the 'wild west' of United States. In Canada the North-West Mounted Police, forerunner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, was formed to ensure law and order in these territories.

#### LIFE, LIBERTY

You know the phrase from the United States Declaration of Independence, which aspires to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. That expresses an individualistic attitude to the building of that country.

#### PEACE WELFARE

The equivalent phrase when Canada came to be created was 'peace, welfare and good government'. This evolved into 'peace, order and good government' in the current Canadian constitution. Both versions imply that the development of Canada was much more of a collective act than an assertion of individuality. Our founders believed that good government and peace was the key to the welfare of the people.

#### WINTER PRAIRIES

The climate is also a factor that influences the way that Canadians interact with each other. Those people from the rest of the world who settled in the prairies to become farmers over a century ago faced a very tough climate with very cold winters. They had to help each other survive when a crop failed or a house burned down.

#### ASYLUM SEEKER

Even today, people stranded outdoors can quickly die of exposure if no-one comes to help them. Last year some would-be immigrants crossing from the United States into Manitoba lost fingers from frostbite and might have died if no-one had helped them.

All these reasons explain why most Canadians are usually more courteous, civil and helpful than most people in other parts of the world. I urge you to reflect on this if you intend to make your home in Canada.

#### THANK BUS DRIVER

You could start by thanking the driver next time you get off a Vancouver bus!

#### CANADIAN COURTEOUS

I'll leave it there for discussion. Now I'd like to hear your views.

#### THANK YOU